

Tolerance a lost virtue in NZ

Political advertisements are informative but often for the wrong reasons.

I watched one example recently where New Zealanders of all ethnicities and age groups appeared as members of a happy national mosaic.

Like our country's "clean green" image, it is a seductive ideal that we are more tolerant, enlightened and accepting of diversity than people of other countries. If only it were true.

The reality is clear when the Treaty of Waitangi is mentioned in certain circles and the predictable mud-slide of intolerance starts to flow.

An August 18 *New Zealand Herald* article canvassed "popular" views on a range of issues, including the Treaty.

The Treaty was carefully juxtaposed against the phrase 'handouts to Maori'.

This implies specific rights the British Government included in the agreement can be reduced to a tawdry form of exploitation by some Maori.

After interviewing Pakeha New Zealanders about the Treaty, the reporter concluded: "The predominant theme is that, whatever the rights and wrongs of 150 years ago, the Treaty now gives money and privileges to people who just happen to be descended from the 'right' side of the New Zealand wars — even though almost every Maori now also has European ancestors."

However, there is a fig leaf of self-righteousness covering these unpleasant sentiments.

It appears in the phrase: "We're all New Zealanders, we should all be equal." Equality and resolving Treaty breaches are not mutually exclusive ideals but they appear so in the comments of Treaty opponents.

Those who proclaim a "one New Zealand" sentiment are often very quick to split the community along ethnic lines.

A comment by an 18-year-old Howick student which appeared in the article encapsulates the "us and them" mentality.

"Helen Clark just keeps forking out and forking out to those Maoris. I think there's got to be a point where she's got to say, 'That's enough'."

This language is hugely significant. Maori are relegated to the "them" compartment and not New Zealanders at all.

Notions of tolerance and understanding are nowhere to be seen.

Instead it's Maori who are

separatists, living off the state — particularly through Treaty settlements — and upsetting what would otherwise be a very stable apple cart of race relations.

So what are some of the facts relating to Treaty settlements?

The entire amount of money the Government wishes to allocate to resolve all historical Treaty claims is equivalent to the amount of money spent every seven weeks on those working-age New Zealanders who are on benefits — just over \$1 billion.

This conservative estimate is perhaps just one-thirtieth of one per cent of what the Crown has misappropriated from Maori through breaches of the Treaty since 1840 — a staggeringly small amount.

As for the settlements themselves, I know of one person who receives an annual cheque for \$1 as his share of the allocation of profits from a Treaty settlement.

That's hardly the sort of grasping handout mentality that is popularly painted.

Moreover, when it comes to the scale of Treaty breaches, some of the biggest transgressions have happened in this generation.

The Government's successful attempt to acquire over 80 per cent of Maori commercial fisheries took place in 1992.

The foreshore and seabed legislation is another statute which clearly violates the Treaty.

The image of tolerant New Zealanders may not always apply in practice but there is some consolation to be found.

There is a growing number of people who are making the effort to discover the meaning and significance of the Treaty.

Perhaps this is where the recovery of the ideal might start.

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Paul Moon

Men: Bastards with redeeming features

It's true what feminists, forgotten housewives and scorned lovers have been saying for years. Men are bastards.

They really are quite despicable. Like rotten apples, many blokes put up a facade of decency but under the skin you'll find a core of badness you always suspected was there.

Men are bastards in ways even feminists can't put their finger on.

Men aren't bastards because they've made a glass ceiling for ambitious females to bonk their heads on.

Neither does drinking too much and weeing in public, make a man a bastard.

Oh no, the true source of men's bastard-ness runs deep within them, in the very way they think about things.

It is in their very bones, in the parts they think with.

Heterosexual identity in modern societies is a mish-mash of traditional ideas but there are still truths set in stone.

From those males with beautiful, comparatively loving girlfriends to the hopeless and socially isolated, some things can be relied upon.

When a good looking woman walks past, the discreet turning of the head is not because of the lingering effects of weight training.

It seems all guys are the same.

Even when we have it good, we can't help looking for something more curvy, more lumpy and more saucy.

While most girls have the ability to stop, look around and be thankful for what they have, men just can't seem to think past the last pair of long legs they looked at.

So where's the trust in our relationships?

Trust is a valuable commodity, developed when two people come together in wilful ignorance of how evil each other is.

But despite this, the label "trustworthy" is near the top of an extensive list of things that can't be applied to the male mind.

A trip inside her partner's brain would leave a woman disillusioned.

It would soon put a stop to any unresolved issues she might have about whether her man truly loves her, whether he's worth all the love and patience she has invested.

She would come out thinking that he doesn't and for the sake of all things holy, he's not.

I would ask this despairing woman what she had learned during the time in her testosterone-fuelled cage.

"It was so confusing," she would sob.

"He's paid for 14 dinners, 124 flowers, and three pieces of relatively inexpensive jewellery but I'm just a part of his large flow chart of buttocks."

Let's face it, we men employ a special kind of maths when it comes to evaluating our more curvaceous friends.

We see the obvious. We think in two's and in one's and we add them up to a superficial score, regardless of how complex the person is.

We see what's right there in front of us and sometimes it's so intriguing that it focuses our brain like the aim of an olympic rifleman.

Men can be superficial bastards but that doesn't mean women should give up.

No, not yet. I'm sure men do have hidden somewhere an ability to love.

It may be holed up in the back of their brain, filed in an obscure folder marked "damn good cooking", but it's there and with enough time it can be found.

After all, even a bastard needs to eat.

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ILLUSTRATIONS: SARAH RESTALL

ple get past the basic jigsaw of interpersonal politics.

It seems fair to say, given the numbers of women who declare that men are the lesser sex, that there are elements of the male breed that are utterly incompatible with feminine ways.

Men can be pigheaded, self-centred, egocentric, power-hungry and smelly.

Of course, there are many that use the 40 per cent more muscle mass to their advantage.

But, let's face it, there are plenty of unbearable members of the female gender who share and exemplify a plethora of traits such as those just mentioned and many more.

What men tolerate from the echelons of femininity is definitely equal to what women tolerate from them.

Men far more than women, have consistency with their behaviour and character, even in their negative qualities.

Declaring that all men are bastards is far too easy — it's like saying that men and women are from different planets.

This obliterates any possibility of finding common ground and renders the struggle to get along with the opposite sex basically futile.

Conflict between the sexes seems to develop because humans are inherently flawed.

We are essentially proud creatures, so we tend to fob our imperfections off on to other parties.

This is a classic pattern of behaviour for any woman who, unwilling to admit to her negative qualities, will make sweeping generalisations about her male counterpart.

She will make sure it's all his fault and she doesn't have to confront difficult aspects of the female condition.

There are many things about being a woman that are difficult to contend with, the least of them being hormones.

The reality is men can provide a variety of uses.

If they have a history of healthy relationship with their mother and/or sisters, they stand in good stead to be sensitive to a woman's needs.

They can be handy if they're tall and reach places women can't, and manage to develop a sharp sense of humour if they're short.

Men give great hugs, especially if they are of the fluffy breed of woven chest male.

They can give a rational and reasonable argument in a confrontation with hysterical neurosis.

They can be relied on for an easy friendship that can range from playmate to bedmate. Naturally they are the piece of the procreation puzzle that fits nicely into place when two peo-

Men can be pigheaded, self centred, egocentric, power hungry and smelly.

A man will be controlling and aggressive if it is an innate part of his character, rather than bursting into antagonistic behaviour at inopportune times of the month as a woman can.

Men are generally straight forward with their emotions, though many are rather inept at articulating their inner side.

If and when they do, they don't add reserved snippets of information, hammered home with a dose of resentment.

Perhaps gender-based denigration can cease when people start to focus on finding the balance between the extremes of masculinity and femininity.

Somewhere between the two, there surely exists a balanced and hopefully contented, human being.

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